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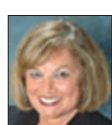
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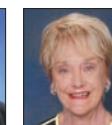
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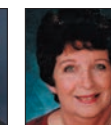
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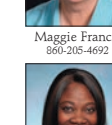
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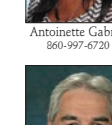
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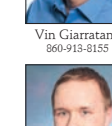
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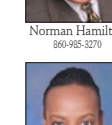
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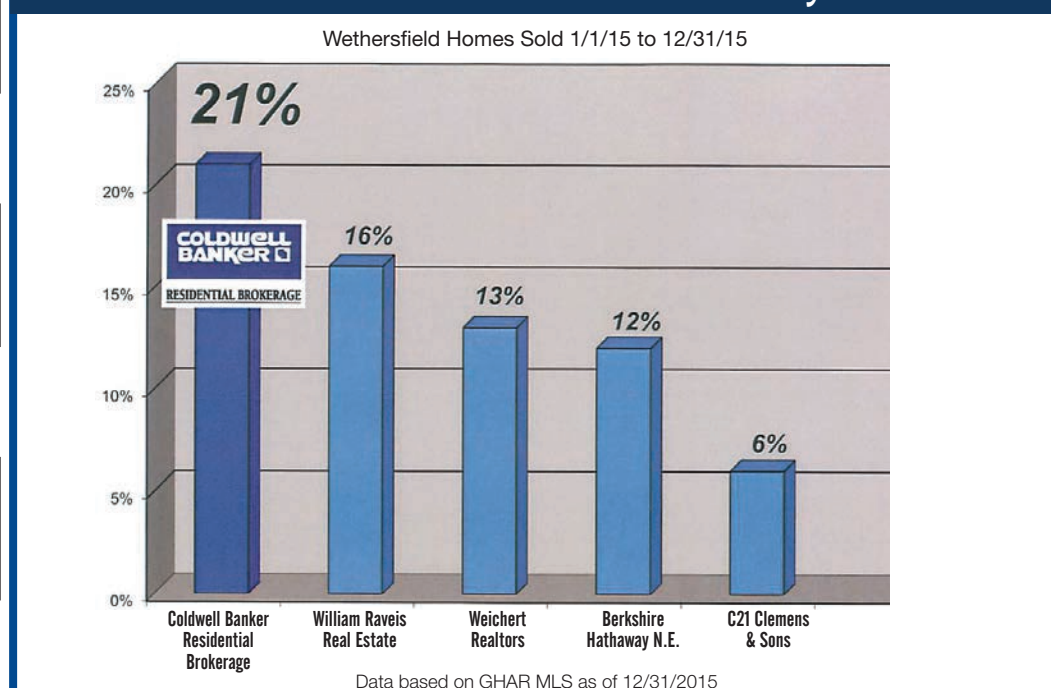


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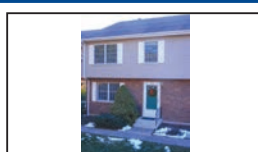
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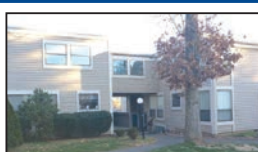
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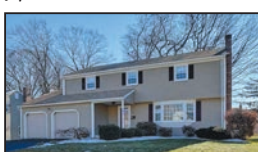
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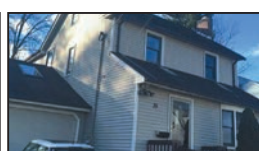
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March 2016

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"We want a healthy business sector, we want a positive real estate environment."

- Town Manager Jeff Bridges

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ON THE COVER

Martha "Marty" Koehler is a volunteer reader with the United Way at Burr Elementary School in Hartford.

Photo by Lisa Brisson

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Acting and ‘Working’

Wethersfield High School students preparing for spring musical

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Beams of sunlight streamed in through the high windows of the band room at Wethersfield High School. Standing in front of a row of multi-sized marching drums, senior Allison Weed, 17, and freshman Allison Appel, 14, were shoulder to shoulder looking at the script before them.

Each was giving a monologue about their characters’ respective jobs as a waitress and telephone operator, but every now and then their words came together, symbolic of how two people in two vastly different places can feel so similar.

“It’s so hard,” Allison Appel said of the tricky dialogue.

The Allisons, as they are known by English teacher and Director Jeff Roets, are two of the 30-person cast for the school’s upcoming musical, “Working,” a minimalist show by Nina Faso and Stephen Schwartz. They also wrote the

Broadway hit “Wicked.”

In addition to Schwartz, “Working” boasts a long list of songwriters including James Taylor and Lin-Manuel Miranda, creator of Broadway’s “Hamilton: The Musical.”

“Instead of seeing ‘Hamilton,’ you can come see our show,” Roets joked.

As a musical, “Working” goes in a different direction than the school’s recent productions of “Seussical the Musical” and “Into the Woods.”

“There’s a sense of weight to it that you don’t always get with musical theater,” Roets said. “I wanted to do something a little bit grown up. I wanted to do something that people don’t really know.”

“Working” is a character-driven musical adapted from the 1974 book “Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do,” by Studs Terkel.

The book is a series of interviews with people in a variety of careers from across the country.

The musical touches upon many of the stories told in the interview and finds ways to connect each character to another.

“When Roets was first telling us about it, he was saying that it doesn’t really have a plot, and we were like, ‘what do you mean it doesn’t have a plot?’” junior Erica MacLean, 16, said. “One story works its way into another and, in the end, they all connect.”

She was not the only one to feel that initial sense of confusion and hesitation when he announced the musical back in the fall.

“The kids were resistant to it when I first said this is what we were going to do,” Roets said. “I knew they needed to hear it first. Once they heard it, they were like, ‘oh, I like that.’”

“Honestly, I was not very excited at first,” junior Jacklyn Snide, 17, said.

“We wanted the big theatrics, but the more we got into it, the more it’s really hitting us all. Especially for those of us who are getting ready for college, it’s made us think about the paths we choose to take.”

In addition to the thematic and artistic reasoning for choosing this musical, Roets said the minimalistic show was also a practical choice because the students will be performing at Webb School while the high school’s auditorium is under construction.

Since the performance space at Webb is also shared with the elementary school’s music program as well as an ongoing production of “Annie, Junior,” he needed a show that didn’t require elaborate set pieces, props or costumes.



Cast members of Wethersfield High School’s production of “Working” gathered in the band room to rehearse lines before their premiere in March.

"This show is designed to be done on a really basic production level, which also allows you to focus on the acting and the singing," Roets said.

The director and his performers described "Working" as being lyrical-ly powerful.

"A lot of the music is really stripped back and focuses on the lyrics, as opposed to the big theatrical aspect of it," Jacklyn said.

The meaning behind each of those songs has also been especially important to the cast, some of whom said the music has altered their view on what it means to be a working adult.

"There's one song called 'If I Could Have Been' and it's about when people have that moment of, if I had followed a different path, where would I have been today?" senior Rachel Way said.

"It's really something that makes you think. No matter who you are, there will be something that hits home with you in this show."

"With songs like 'Just a Housewife,' they realize how much their moms do for them, and 'Fathers and Sons' explores those relationships," Roets said. "For the participants, it's been changing the way they realize that adults work."

The show is double casted, allowing different students to play multiple different roles.

"There's two very different casts, so each show is a little bit different," Roets said.

"People will interpret their songs the way they want to perform them, so each night is a different show, really," Rachel, 17, added.

Doing the show as such not only provides a unique experience for the audience, but also allows the performers to further practice their craft.

"It lets you improve yourself as an actor," Erica said. "This isn't any ordinary musical. It's really something special."

Wethersfield High School's production of "Working" will premiere at what Roets called the Senior Senior show, a preview performance for local senior citizens where students from the senior class provide dinner.

"It's a nice intergenerational event," he said. "Also, afterwards I get to hear their feedback on the performance before the real premiere."

With the opening performance date rapidly approaching, students who admitted to being former skeptics said they are proud of the production they have created and

grateful to the adults involved, including Roets, Musical Director Scott Rioux and Producer Sondra Blanzaco, for their help.

"They always tell us it's our show, but we couldn't do any of this without them," Jacklyn said.

"All the adults are amazing," Erica said. "They really care about us as students and as actors." **WL**

"Working" runs March 11-13 and March 18-19 at Webb School.

Show times are 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday and

3:30 p.m. Sunday.

Tickets are available online at showtix4u.com priced at \$14 for adults and \$10 for students and senior citizens. Tickets at the door are \$16 and \$12, respectively.



Photos by Allie Rivera

The music in "Working" is described by students as stripped back and focused on the lyrics. Senior Sawyer Gaunt, left, sings and plays the guitar in the musical number "Fathers and Sons," along with Musical Director Scott Rioux.

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Pleased with progress

Speakers share positive thoughts on how the town is situated in 2016

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Mayor Paul Montinieri and others who spoke at the annual State of the Town breakfast had different things to say, but they all agreed that the town in general is in a solid and stable place, with even better days on the horizon.

The event, held Jan. 28 at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, was sponsored by the Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce. About 75 people attended this event, catered by The Cove Deli.

Speakers included Town Manager Jeff Bridges, Superintendent of Schools Michael Emmett, Peter Gillespie of planning and economic development, and three of the four

members of the town's legislative delegation. Representatives of five businesses that either opened in town over the past year or are expanding also took the podium to share their success stories.

Chamber President Todd Lamore of Lamore's Gulf Station opened the proceedings by announcing that the chamber is planning to add a business expo to its current roster of events and activities on April 7.

Montinieri focused on the partnership between government and business. He pointed out that the Town Council has placed an increased focus on business and economic development in recent years.

"Wethersfield continues to accelerate forward in a positive fashion," he said. "The town is on a very good footing."

The mayor talked of the importance of having a vibrant business district along the Silas Deane Highway. He cited data showing that 65,000 cars use that road every day.

He then spoke of the many businesses that have chosen this town for their physical location. That adds to the grand list, which in turns reduces the tax burden on homeowners.

"There are dozens that have come to Wethersfield in the last two or three years and we're not going to stop," Montinieri said.

"We want a healthy business sector. We want a positive real estate environment," Bridges said.

He spoke of the \$84 million high school expansion and renovation project, scheduled for completion by the end of this calendar year.

"That is the biggest project the town of Wethersfield will ever do," he said.

"We have a new subdivision for the first time since the 1980s," Bridges added.

It is located in the area of Back Lane and Whippoorwill Way and includes approximately 40 residential lots.

"We had a total of 33 new businesses come to town this past

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**“We want a healthy business sector.
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environment.”**

—Town Manager Jeff Bridges

year” and another 28 the year before, Gillespie said. “This is a significant uptick in business activity.”

He added that the town issued more than 2,300 building permits in 2015. Five businesses took advantage of the ongoing façade improvement grant program.

Gillespie is pleased that the town received a \$200,000 state grant to demolish a vacant structure at 1000 Silas Deane Highway. This will allow for a newly constructed facility that will become the headquarters of a furniture company.

He also told the audience that a mixed-use project will replace the former Clearinghouse Auction Gallery on Church Street.

Emmett shared his enthusiasm over the progress being made on the high school and suggested that the chamber move this event to the ren-

ovated WHS next January so that the business community can see the results.

“We’re about 75 percent complete. I will be the first to tell you it has been a major challenge,” he said.

He praised the teaching staff, while also telling the audience that issues facing the district include an enrollment increase of 32 children at Charles Wright School and the need for more space for the high school Transition Academy.

Negotiations are under way and he is hopeful the program will be able to move to larger quarters soon. If it does, it could then welcome tui-

tion-paying students from towns that do not have such academies for students with special needs.

He asked the business community for its help in working with the high school. WHS graduation requirements now demand that each student complete what is called a capstone project in the community.

Emmett also encouraged the business community to tap into the talent of the high school’s award-winning marketing club. He looks forward to the WHS auditorium, now featuring a mezzanine, scheduled to open in March.

Dr. Thomas Brown of Kathy’s



Photo by Mark Jahne

Mayor Paul Montinieri addresses the audience at the annual State of the Town breakfast sponsored by the Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce.

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Urgent Care spoke about how his new business was able to fill a long-vacant space along the Silas Deane. He was researching several towns as he sought a location for his medical clinic and was swayed to select Wethersfield by the enthusiasm he encountered from the mayor

location for her family's new business, Heirloom Market at Comstock Ferre.

"We knew there was nowhere else for this to happen," she said.

Chris Henney spoke on behalf of Putnam Park, which landed a significant new tenant when Connecticut

speak because their topic was state government and its massive budget deficit. They were preparing to go into session to tackle fiscal matters.

"The state of the state is a little more challenging," state Sen. Paul Doyle said. "The numbers still appear to be going the wrong way."

based business have accessed it thus far. He also spoke of revisiting the idea of regionalizing certain government services to save money, a concept that has met strong resistance in the past.

State Rep. Antonio Guerrero said businesses don't like surprises

"We have a new subdivision for the first time since the 1980s."

-Town Manager Jeff Bridges

and the helpful nature of town staff.

Annie Dillon of William Raveis Real Estate talked about the company's new and larger office on the Silas Deane. She praised town staff for helping the company resolve various issues along the way.

Julia Koulouris spoke of how Old Wethersfield was the perfect

Business Systems moved in.

Toni Robinson shared how happy she is that her business, CT Ear, Nose & Throat, has a new and much larger office on the Silas Deane compared to its previous Hartford location.

Three legislators were not as upbeat when it came their turn to

He called the departure of General Electric from Greenwich to the Boston area a wake-up call for Connecticut.

"We have to get our fiscal house in order," he said.

State Rep. Russ Morin spoke of the state's Small Business Express aid program. He said only two town-

and need predictable tax rates. State government needs to do a better job in both areas, he said.

He also continued his campaign to install electronic tolls on bridges and highways as a way to raise revenue for the state budget. Guerrero predicted that this will happen within the next few years. **WL**

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photo by Mark Jahne

Superintendent of
Schools Michael
Emmett

Three percent hike likely

Superintendent and board work
together to craft school budget

by Mark Jahne
Editor

It's an annual challenge in which they try to strike the perfect balance. The trick is to determine how much money is needed to operate a high-performing school system and balance that against what taxpayers can reasonably be expected to pay to support that system.

With this in mind, the Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools Michael Emmett have been holding a series of workshops to craft a 2016-2017 education budget. Their final document

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will be forwarded to the Town Council for inclusion in the overall municipal budget.

The council can cut or add to the bottom line but cannot make line-item changes to the school portion of the budget.

As this issue of Wethersfield LIFE went to press, Emmett's task was to take the results of those various meetings and workshops and craft a formal budget proposal for presentation to the board. That was scheduled for Feb. 23 and it was expected the board would vote on the document that same evening.

The document will then be forwarded to town government no later than March 15. A public hearing on the combined school/government budget is scheduled for April 18.

The expectation, according to Emmett, is that the budget they forward will ask for a 2.97 percent

increase in spending. This is less than neighboring Newington and Rocky Hill, which are asking for 5.99 and 7.83 percent, respectively.

The total Wethersfield school budget would be \$58 million, a hike of \$1.6 million over current spending. As with virtually every school district in the state, salaries and benefits are the two largest budget drivers. Salaries account for 62.5 percent of the proposed budget and benefits account for another 15 percent.

"There's the bulk of your budget right there," he said.

He is pleased that the cost of health insurance benefits rose by a modest amount.

Emmett likes the process that involves multiple workshops before he formally presents a budget proposal. It is different from how school budgets are crafted in most neighboring towns.

"It gives me guidance and allows me to have conversations with the town right up front," he said.

It also allows the board to study trends and discuss numerous initiatives.

"We've been able to fuse technology into the budget. We were able to take care of that last year," he said. "Security continues to be an area of focus for us."

There are 3,263 students currently enrolled in the Wethersfield Public Schools across all grades. The projection is that this number will grow by 12 in the 2016-2017 academic year.

Emmett is looking forward to relocating the Transition Academy for high school students with special needs to a larger space in town. The district needs approval from the town Planning and Zoning Commission before the move can

take place.

He is also focused upon curriculum improvements and programming to match the 21st century learning center that the expanded and renovated high school now represents.

"We've done some pretty significant upgrades at the high school in terms of more course offerings," he said.

The \$84.4 million project is on time and on budget, Emmett said. It should be finished by the end of this calendar year, and he is now looking for ways to save a little money from the projected final cost.

The superintendent is excited that the completely redesigned auditorium will, for the first time, feature a mezzanine. That portion of the building is scheduled to open in March.

It has been a challenge to complete the renovations while the build-

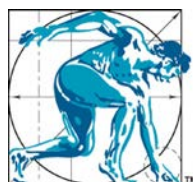


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ing was in use by 1,198 students, faculty and other staff. That approach has been compared to fixing an airplane while it is airborne.

Emmett is not asking for much in terms of more staff, but his wish list includes one English Language Learners teacher and a certified media specialist.

added space, and more security staff, he said, in addition to the fact that the Board of Education is interested in implementing a gifted and talented program.

It also wants to expand the pre-kindergarten program currently offered only at Webb School to the other elementary schools.

fortresses. Granato said the board will likely follow the recommendations of Harold Even, the head of security for the district and a former Hartford police captain.

"Number two, of course, is class size. We're using a very challenging curriculum, especially [at the] elementary" [level], she said.

gifted and talented program.

"We don't have the money to implement them in September, but that doesn't mean we have taken them off the table," she said.

"Our third thing is curriculum. The curriculum we have in place needs to have all its pieces," she added.

Those pieces are teachers, tech-

"Security continues to be an area of focus for us."

-Superintendent of Schools Michael Emmett

He also seeks three part-time positions at the middle school: world language teacher, social worker and special education teacher.

The high school could use a special education teacher, a custodian to help clean and maintain the newly

"The number one priority is to make sure the schools are secure," Board of Education Chairwoman Barbara "Bobbie" Granato said.

She added that it is not the intent of the board to turn the seven schools into what she called armed

Granato contended this curriculum works best if the classes are not too large. In addition to those immediate goals, she is also looking at the longer range. That would include expanding the pre-K program and implementing the aforementioned

nology, and reasonable class sizes. Granato firmly believes that students not only need to understand how technology works, but the role it plays in facilitating learning.

"They need to be very tech savvy," she said. **WL**


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Reaching out

Board leaders strive for better communication with public

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Barbara “Bobbie” Granato and Kevin Hill are enthusiastic about all of the positive things they see taking place in the Wethersfield Public Schools. Their hope is to do a better job conveying the details of those accomplishments to the general public.

Better public communication is one of the goals of Granato, newly elected to the Board of Education this past November and then named chairwoman. The same is true for Hill, another newly elected member. Both are Democrats.

They are pleased with the general public support of the schools and the teachers who educate young minds. They also heard complaints

about the number of professional development days that result in substitute teachers filling in.

“On the campaign trail, we heard loud and clear they did not want teachers taken out of the classroom,” Granato said.

She also learned that residents want to learn more about the climate and culture of the schools.

“We’re also visiting with teachers ... going into the buildings. We’re changing the model. There’s open communication everywhere,” she said.

“We want to hear directly from them,” Hill added.

Both said they want to encourage more involvement from parents, students and teachers. They under-

stand that there will be occasional disagreements but are hopeful the board will act in a bipartisan manner to do what is in the best interest of public education.

The duo comes from different life perspectives. Granato retired after a long teaching career in town this past June. Hill is the father of two young children.

They want to get the word out beyond this town’s borders as well so that young families from other towns will relocate here. They hope the district can do a better job of treating each child as an individual.

“We’re at a tipping point,” Granato said. “We’re one of the few towns in the area that is growing.”

She said school readiness is an issue that needs to be addressed. Children who enter kindergarten with some kind of preschool experience have been shown to enjoy a great advantage over children who do not attend preschool.

With that in mind, she would like to provide a pre-kindergarten program – as some other area towns

do – in all five elementary schools. Right now only Webb School has such a program.

“The benefits of getting them in at age 3 or 4 are huge,” she said. “We have a tremendous resource in Wethersfield in WECC.”

The Wethersfield Early Childhood Collaborative, established in 2004, is a coalition of people whose shared goal is to prepare and support children, birth to 8, for good health and school success by building awareness of the importance of early care and education.

Granato also wants the schools to create an environment that is rich in literacy and promotes better vocabulary.

“We want to make sure the high school is state of the art, especially technology,” she said.

In her mind, school should not just prepare students for college or the workforce, but for life many years down the road. The board has also instructed Superintendent of Schools Michael Emmett to make communication one of his top three goals. **WL**




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Keeping schools safe

Retired police captain serves as director of security and residency

by Mark Jahne
Editor

There are more than 3,600 students and more than 600 faculty members and other staff who spend time within the Wethersfield Public Schools every academic day. Harold “Hal” Even’s job is keep them all safe.

The retired Hartford police captain was

hired this past year to serve as the district’s director of security and residency. He has been working since then to do everything he can to make the schools are as safe as possible while at the same time not turning them into prison-like fortresses.

A Wethersfield High School graduate, he earned a bachelor of science degree in criminal

justice from St. Anselm College and a master’s in public policy from Trinity College. His professional career includes experience in both law enforcement and corporate workplace security while employed at Aetna.

He spent 20 years with the Hartford Police Department and developed emergency response plans for the city’s schools.

He also served on such units as the emergency response team and disorder control team.

Even, 56, also spent five years as an officer with the Nashua, N.H., police. He has lived in town most of his life and is thrilled to be able to serve his community in this manner.

“I went to four of the schools in the district. I raised my children here. My children attended Wethersfield schools,” he said. “I know a lot of the families, I know a lot of the children.”

His scholastic career took him from Emerson-Williams to Highcrest to Webb, when it was a junior high school, and then to WHS. He graduated with the Class of 1977.



Harold “Hal” Even, the director of security and residency for the Wethersfield Public Schools, stands alongside a video screen that displays the views offered by internal and external security cameras at the high school.



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“School violence is on everybody’s mind. Recent events have forced us to think about this. Our job is to be prepared.”

-Harold “Hal” Even

“It was perfect timing,” he said of his new job. “I knew that they were looking.”

His corporate job was OK, but it required a great deal of travel and that lost its appeal to him, so he seized the opportunity to work in the town where he lives.

“After Columbine, I did some school safety planning,” he said of the 1999 Colorado high school shooting that left 15 dead and 24 injured, changing the world of school security forever.

Then came the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in Newtown that left 20 children and six adults dead. Cities and towns all over the country made school safety an even greater priority.

“The focus of my responsibility is making sure that we are compliant with all the post-Sandy Hook legislation,” Even said.

The legislation requires every district in Connecticut, and each individual school, to have official safety plans that meet various requirements.

“Every year, these things have to be updated. We’re in very good shape,” he said.

He said a solid foundation was already in place when he arrived thanks to prior work done by security consultant Tom Dillon, a former town police officer. Even said Superintendent of Schools Michael Emmett and the Board of Education have provided him with excellent support.

“The position was designed following Sandy Hook and knowing we had areas of weakness in the district. Hal came aboard and dove right in,” Emmett said.

While the schools have a “positive relationship” with first responders, Even said it is difficult to simulate real life. That is why there is ongoing training for

police, fire and other personnel on how to handle any kind of emergency in any of the schools.

“School violence is on everybody’s mind. Recent events have forced us to think about this. Our job is to be prepared,” he said. “Parents are extremely supportive of what we’re trying to do. You can’t ignore what’s going on. You have to acknowledge it and you have to train for it.”

Training for faculty and staff is important, he said, because they need to know how to react in a stressful scenario.

“Active shooters are extremely rare. We practice lockouts and lockdowns,” he added. “You have to be proactive now.”

Even said people in a school, workplace or any other location have three options when faced with violence. The first, and best, is to flee if possible. If that doesn’t work, they can shelter in place. The final option is to fight back as best they can.

Even also noted that full-time police officers are assigned to the middle and high schools. They are armed and trained to respond to any threat. He and the school resource officers have built relationships with the rest of the faculty and staff.

“Wethersfield is very lucky that we have enjoyed the services of some very qualified SROs. Training for school violence was one of the toughest things we ever did,” he said of his time with the Hartford police.

It’s important for him to detect any vulnerabilities and correct them as soon as possible. Aspects of the ongoing high school renovation project were changed to provide for better security.

He said every response plan is designed, in part, to buy time for police and other trained per-

sonnel to arrive on the scene and confront the threat.

“I think we’re in very good shape. We’re constantly doing risk assessments on the buildings with police and fire.”

While many people tend to focus on external threats, he also has to worry about threats from within, such as angry or disaffected students.

“These are most effectively dealt with through the relationships developed between students, faculty and police,” he said.

He added that police and fire officials evaluate all school drills. Bullying and cyber bullying are another focus.

“As soon as we get wind of something like that, the appropriate people look into it. We get to the bottom of things ASAP,” Even said.

He said there are medical incidents and other everyday things that can trigger the emergency plan. As one example, he spoke of a school that had to be evacuated because some rooftop equipment was leaking gas.

Emmett said Even not only reviewed security needs but has made it a point to be present for lockdown, evacuation and fire drills.

“It’s going very well. He’s provided professional development to principals,” Emmett said. “He attends many of our administrative team meetings. We were looking for somebody who had law enforcement background.”

Even also works with staff and parents. His office is at the Stillman central office building in Old Wethersfield, but he makes it a point to spend a good deal of his time in the schools to create a visible presence.

Emmett said Even has offered excellent advice on infrastructure improvements to the schools that will enhance their safety. **WL**

A wonderful world of color

United Paint & Wallpaper celebrates a golden anniversary

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The paint industry has changed a great deal over the past 50 years, but certain basics at United Paint & Wallpaper remain constant. They include high-quality products, wide variety, knowledgeable staff and a strong focus on customer service.

Jim Banfield is the manager of the Wethersfield store; there's another one in Glastonbury. Like many of the other staff, he has worked at United Paint & Wallpaper for decades. The business was founded by Phil and Velva Lennox of Glastonbury.

"They started this in 1966 and I started in 1970," he said.

The store was originally in a smaller space in its shopping center along the Silas Deane Highway, near the intersection of Wells Road. It expanded into a neighboring storefront about 25 years ago.

"Benjamin Moore is our main line," Banfield said, although the store also offers other brands of paint. "We have four basements under here full of product."

Additional inventory is stored in an East Hartford warehouse.

Carpets, wallpaper and window treatments were added over the years and they have staff to do the installations. A more recent addition is paint specifically designed for use on laminate countertops to give them a new and different look.

The store also has a pair of interior designers. It keeps extensive records and can help customers match a paint exactly, even if it was last purchased many years ago.

It also participates in a state recycling program called Paint Care that allows people to bring in old cans of paint for safe disposal. A wide array of painting and related supplies line the shelves.

"Wethersfield has been a good town to do business in. We're working on our third generation of customers," Banfield said.

"We do a lot of contractor work. We have guys from a long way away who do business with us," he added. "We've been able to service thou-

sands of homes in the area."

He has seen the products they sell change over the years. They are both more efficient and safer for the environment. That's particularly true of Benjamin Moore paints, he said.

"Products we have now, there's no question they are better than what we had 20 years ago," Banfield said. "All of our tinting machines are computer operated."

The store stocks fewer ready-made colors than in years past. That means more mixing, but it also means an exact color match to meet the customer's desires.

"Now, we make all the colors. In some lines, we even make white," he said.

Look up while walking around the store and one will notice a lot of Hartford Whalers photos and sweaters. Many of the staff were avid Whalers fans during the team's time here and such star players as Gordie Howe and Ron Francis were customers of United Paint & Wallpaper.

Banfield is pleased that the store made it through the economic recession intact and did not have to lay off any of its staff.

"I was one of the original salesmen who was dealing with Phil. He was looking for some help," Paul Maichack said.

"My father and Phil were friends. My dad used to own Central Hardware," added Mike Prange.

"We have customers who come in with blueprints and we can fully do their color scheme," Patricia Canzanella said. "We all kind of work hand in hand."

She is an interior designer. Canzanella said she gets referrals from builders, contractors, tile professionals and carpenters, among others.

United Paint & Wallpaper staff and their years of service are: Philip and Velva Lennox, 50 years; Jim Banfield, 46; Paul



photo by Mark Jahne

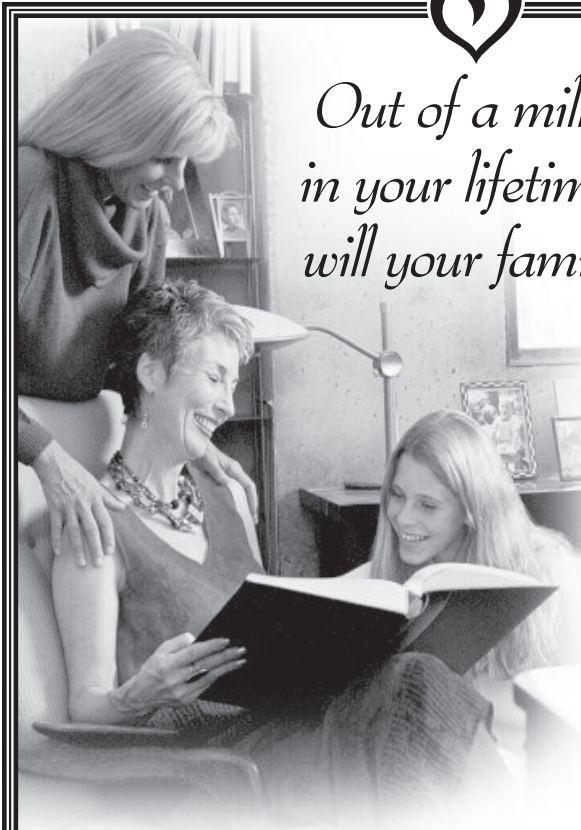
Mike Prange, Brian Banfield, Jim Banfield Jr. and Paul Maichack, from left, are longtime staff members of United Paint & Wallpaper.

Maichack, 43; Brian Banfield, 41; Mike Prange, 36; Jim Banfield Jr., 31; Patricia Canzanella, 20; Erik Oleson, 19; Jim Matarangas, five; Leslie Artibani, four; Debbie Levesque, three and June Desmond, one. **WL**

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New life for old building

Heirloom Market at Comstock Ferre is already drawing a crowd

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The idea was to have a soft opening, a trial run fueled by word of mouth, before kicking off their new business. That didn't work out quite as planned for the new Heirloom Market at Comstock Ferre.

As soon as Spiro and Julia Koulouris stocked the shelves and started serving coffees and baked goods, people started showing up at the door, anxious to see what the young couple had done to breathe new life into the iconic Comstock, Ferre & Co. building on Main Street in Old Wethersfield.

That customer base continues to grow, even though the official grand opening is not scheduled until May. The couple, both of whom have experi-

"The challenge is finding the time to finish the projects we want to do before the grand opening," he added. "We hope between now and then to incorporate more local products. We hope to be as local and organic as possible."

They are meeting with local farmers to pursue that goal. One of his projects is to establish greenhouses at the rear of the property where they grow and sell plants. Another is to add more seating.

The couple lives within walking distance of their shop and fell in love with Old Wethersfield the minute they set foot here several years ago.

The property is still owned by Jere and Emilee Gettle of Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds of Missouri. Their

to be the caretakers of this property. It's a big deal for us," Julia said.

Everything in the store is either organic and/or locally grown. GMOs are banned. The concept is to sell the healthiest food they can find.

The main room houses both the café and store. Shelves are lined with chips, salsa, soft drinks, coffee and tea, crackers, nuts, cookies, oils and sauces, spices, rice, beans, pasta, cereal and more.

There are bins full of produce and fresh bread. Fresh meat, cheese, eggs and milk can be found in the refrigerated area and there's also a space containing frozen foods.

The café serves tea, freshly made juice, coffee from J. Rene Coffee Roasters in West Hartford or one of several espresso-based beverages. The menu is currently limited to baked goods, quiche and soup. Sandwiches and other items will be offered soon.

Julia said the market takes the farm-to-table concept a step further by encouraging patrons to go from seed to plate. Customers can buy the heirloom seeds, grow the plants, then

eat them.

Recipes are available for how to take those squash seeds one just purchased, for example, and make squash soup once the seeds grow into a mature plant.

"We'll be selling plants out front. We're trying to make this space a dynamic space," Spiro said.

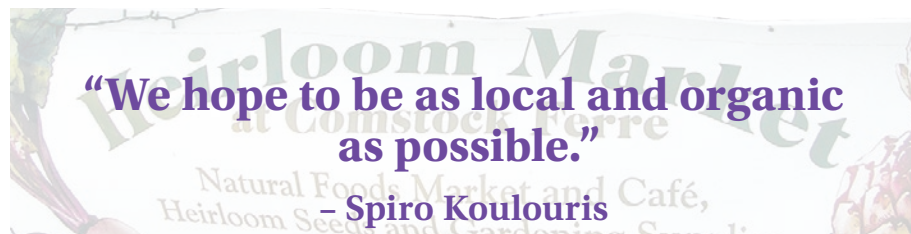
That includes making it available as a site where people can hold meetings. Gov. Dannel Malloy stopped by in early February for part of his traveling road show of state budget discussions with small groups of citizens. **WL**

The Heirloom Market at Comstock Ferre is open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. See heirloommarket.com.



Photo by Mark Jahne

Julia and Spiro Koulouris are thrilled with the early reviews of their new Heirloom Market at Comstock Ferre.



– Spiro Koulouris

ence in the restaurant industry, are thrilled.

"It's going really good. We've had so much response," Julia said. "It's been fun. There are people coming in the door every minute. We're so excited about the feedback we've gotten so far."

"The one thing that's been really great is the amount of support we've gotten from people walking in," Spiro said.

seeds are on sale in one of the rooms at the new market.

The Koulouris family has a lease to operate the main building as a natural foods market, café and garden supply center. They may expand into other buildings on the property over time.

"We have an option to buy in the lease and also an option to expand. We take seriously the responsibility

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|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 7* - 8 yrs. | 9 - 10 yrs | 11 - 12 yrs. | 13 - 14 yrs. |
| 45 - 110 lbs. | 55 - 130 lbs | 75 - 155 lbs. | 100 - 185 lbs. |

**Prior to August 1st*

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| 5 - 7 yrs. | 8 - 9 yrs. | 10 - 11 yrs. |
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Flag ages determined as of September 1, 2016

*A player's age is determined as of December 31st of the playing year; Mighty Mites must turn 7 prior to August 1st, but may not turn 9 prior to December 31st. All Children playing Tackle Football must attend sign-ups to be weighed. The CTYFL has mandatory weight and age rules. NO child outside of the weights and ages listed above is eligible to play. Birth Certificates are required for all Children playing and all "A" Squad players must submit a copy of their 4th term report card indicating that they will not be attending High School during the playing year. Any Child who falls outside the weight limit of his/her Tackle Division will be allowed to move up one division provided they are not overweight in that division as well **Cheerleaders are not bound by weight restrictions. ***Flag Football will continue to be an in-town league. It remains unchanged from years past. Please visit us on the web for all up to the minute information.*

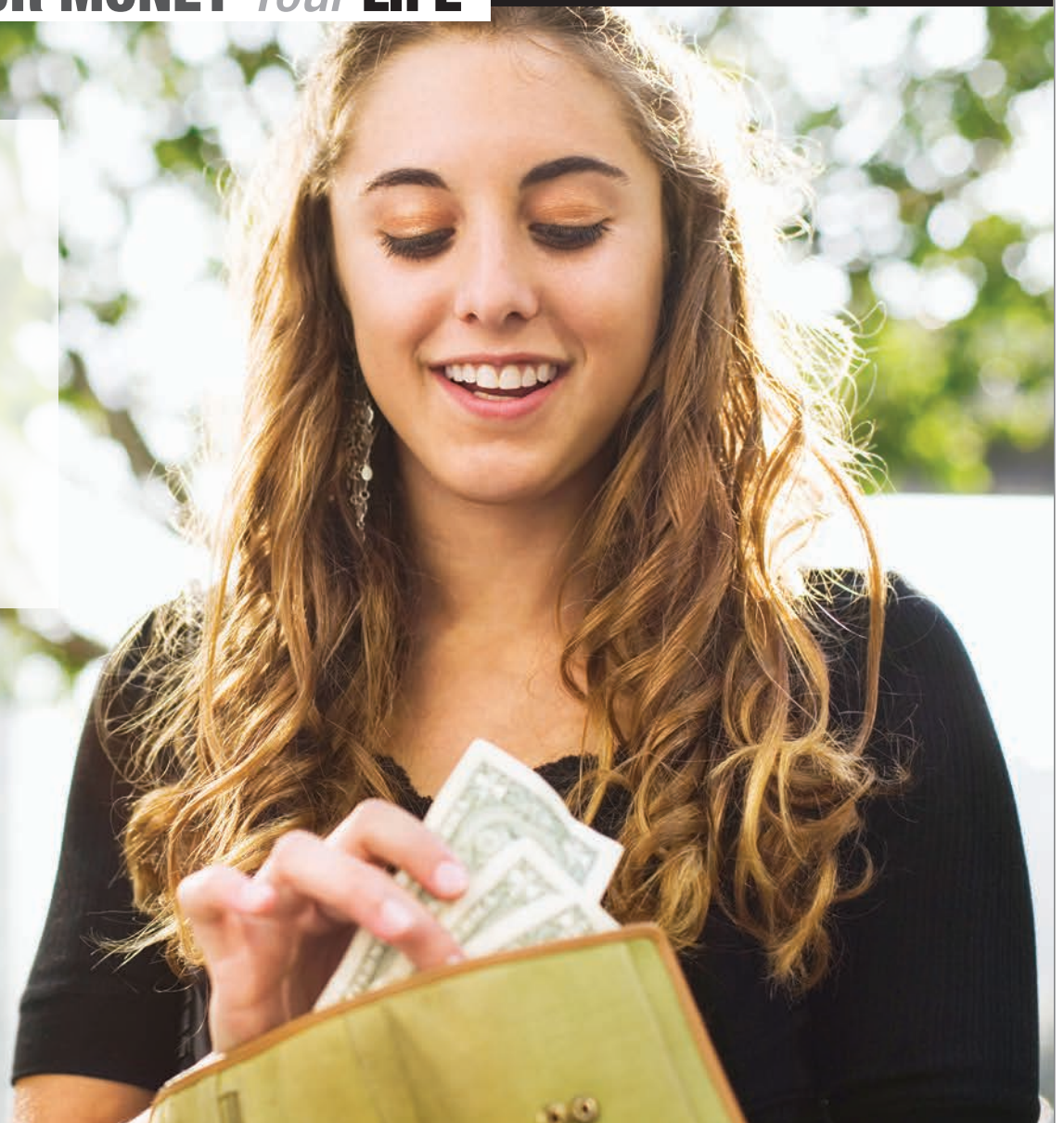
www.wethersfieldyouthfootball.org

YOUR MONEY *Your* LIFE

Planning to spend

How to manage disposable income

by **Alison Jalbert**
Assistant Editor



Whether a person is 28 or 68, they want to go to concerts, enjoy a meal at a restaurant with friends or take a trip. With the high cost of living and the importance of saving money, having funds for these “inessential” purchases may seem impossible.

Local experts say it is a possibility, as long as careful planning and

budgeting is done.

Diane Fisher, senior vice president of investments with the FDW Group of Raymond James in West Hartford, said ‘budget’ is a word people of all ages balk at, but it’s an important concept to grasp and execute. Certified Financial Planner Nancy Fellingner of planningWise Wealth in Simsbury agreed.

“For absolutely anyone at any

stage in life, it’s essential to have a spending plan,” she said. “I call it a spending plan as opposed to a budget because most people, I think, kind of bristle at the thought of a budget. They think, ‘Oh, it’s deprivation, the things I can’t do because I’m on a budget.’”

The basic concept is to make sure all expenses are tracked, and identifying what is essential,

Fellinger said. Putting that plan into practice is the challenge.

For the Millennial generation, those born in the early 1980s through the early 2000s, Fisher said setting up a good budget after graduating high school or college is “the most important thing.” It can be easy to do; going online, there are many budget forms available, or, many financial advisors offer their



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services to young people for free.

"They can find a financial advisor who can help them set up a budget – there are a lot of goodhearted people out there who will spend the time," she said. "It's all overwhelming unless you have some certain knowledge of it."

Fisher acknowledged that saving money, especially for inessential spending, is difficult.

"The game changer is student loans," she said. "The money they used to put towards discretionary stuff [goes to loans] – they almost have another mortgage or rent."

Fellinger said the challenge many people have is not just distinguishing what qualifies as discretionary, but making choices between those items. If a person wants to watch a movie, do they go to the movies, or get a monthly Netflix account? If they want to go to the museum, do they wait and go on a free or reduced admission day or pay full price? If they want a cup of coffee in the morning, do they make it at home or stop at a coffee shop?

"It's about being conscious of not only what's being bought, but what other alternatives there are," she said. "Sometimes it comes down to, 'Yeah, I've thought about this, but this experience of having this cup of coffee means something to me and I'm going to make a choice to do that ... I may need to make some changes in other areas of my life so I can do that and not be stretching myself.'"

People need to realize that if they handle their finances properly, they can still get concert tickets or go out to dinner, Fisher said, but it's most important to save first. At any age, people should save 10 percent of their income, a practice she said is harder now than it was in the past, and avoid impulse purchases.

When it comes to determining how much to set aside for discretionary spending, Fisher said it can be hard to calculate it, percentage-wise, but she recommends including everything someone wants to spend outside of the essentials. It's necessary to go through all expenses – Netflix may seem like only \$9 a

month and Hulu only \$11 – to determine what truly is necessary.

Fellinger quoted baseball great Yogi Berra, who said, "Ninety percent of the game is half mental." Much of what drives the success of a spend-

"It's about being conscious of not only what's being bought, but what alternatives there are."

–Nancy Fellinger

ing plan is a person's outlook and how they approach it mentally.

"If we're doing it in a positive kind of way – this is something I can do, this is positive for myself, I feel really good about this – it's going to take [you] in one direction," she said. "If it's perceived as a drag or punishment, it's not going to be good."

Regardless of how limited a bud-

get is, Fellinger said including disposable income as part of a budget is important, because the things it's spent on are what makes life enjoyable. She said people need to look at the entirety of their finances and other resources, including the time spent, energy invested and the return they get on an experience.

"If it's a matter that life is tight because of other necessary expenses – you're budgeting not with money, but with time," she said. "You're looking at expenses not just as dollars, but as time, as energy, as what is nurturing. ... You can spend a lot of money on entertainment and still not feel fulfilled." **WL**

planningWise Wealth, part of Coburn & Meredith, Inc., is at 1 Old Mill Lane in Simsbury. Visit www.planningwisewealth.com or call 860-784-2605 for more information. FDW Advisory Group is located at 29 South Main St., Suite 210 in West Hartford. For more information, call 860-920-5040 or visit fdwgroup.website.raymondjames.com.

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YOUR MONEY *Your* LIFE

Save money, maximize flavor

Making the most out of a trip to the meat counter

by Sloan Brewster
Senior Staff Writer

Saving money at the meat counter doesn't mean cutting back on flavor. Local experts say there are cuts of meat that taste great without making a dent in your grocery budget.

Brian DeVoe, owner of Fitzgerald's Foods in Simsbury, suggested London Broil as a delicious cut of meat that costs a little less.

To make it more tender, it can be marinated, he said. The longer you marinate it, the more flavorful and tender it will be.

Cube and sandwich steaks are also less pricey, DeVoe said. Cube steaks are tenderized in the store. He suggests breading them and cooking them with gravy, peppers and onions.

"They're very affordable and they make a really good meal," he said.

A good way to cook sandwich

steaks, which are thinner, is to pan fry them with olive oil and garlic.

Sirloin strips are naturally tender pieces of meat and can be used in recipes such as Beef Stroganoff, over egg noodles, or cooked with olive oil and salt pepper and put on a salad.

"There's a lot of things you can do with it, and they're very affordable," DeVoe said.

Pot roast or bottom round roast beef are a more affordable cut of meat, he said. Bottom roast is best cooked as a pot roast in broth or gravy because it gets tenderer.

"You can get a lot of meals out of a pot roast," DeVoe said.

Ground beef is another way to save money and can be used for meatloaf or Salisbury steaks, he said.

When shopping for ground beef, go for ground chuck verses

ground sirloin, said Jim Hasch, meet manager, at West Side Marketplace in Rocky Hill.

"There's little more fat in there so it has more flavor," he said.

A nice cut of steak for a good price is petit sirloin.

"That's a nice cut and it's a little less expensive than a rib eye," he said. "It may be a little tougher than a [New York] strip. ... It's still a nice and tender."

When looking for a good price on chicken, go for the thighs and legs, anything with dark meat, they all said, or wait for periodic specials on boneless breasts.

Although chicken is generally affordable, DeVoe said chicken tenders are cheaper than breasts.

A nice meal with boneless breasts is to add Cajun seasoning, cut it up and add it to a salad.

"It's a quick, affordable meal," DeVoe said. "If you like the dark meat, you can do the exact same recipe and it's far less expensive – that's probably \$2 a pound less."

Pork is generally affordable, DeVoe said. Boneless is a little more expensive, he said, and the bone adds flavor anyway. Lamb, while more expensive than most meat, also comes in cheaper cuts, the men said.

For a stew, get the shoulder and buy it the bone in it, Hasch said.

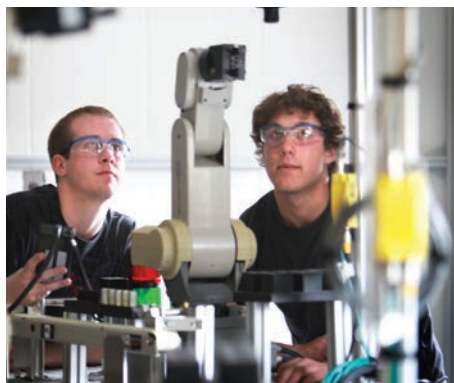
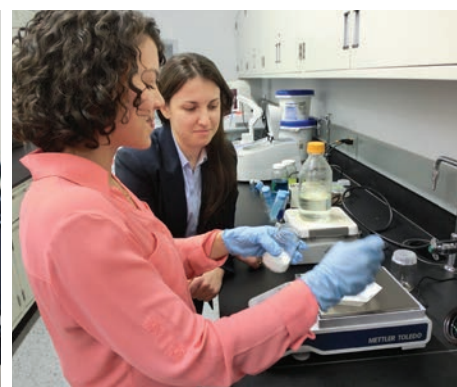
There's a time for leg of lamb too, he added. "Lamb legs may be expensive, but you're going to get a lot more yield. There's less waste. ... You use the whole thing." **WL**

Fitzgerald's Foods is located at 710 Hopmeadow St. in Simsbury. For more information, call 860-658-2271 or visit www.fitzgeraldsfoods.com. West Side Marketplace can be found at 887 Cromwell Ave. in Rocky Hill. Call 860-529-2200 or visit www.west-side-market.com for more information. The Farmington location of Highland Park Market is at 204 Main St. Call 860-674-9536 or visit www.highlandparkmarket.com for more information.

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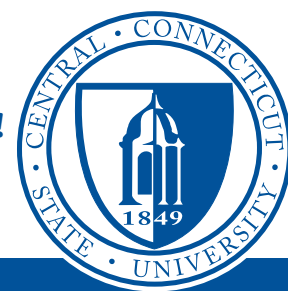


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Start with a dream. Finish with a future!



After each weekly service, members of the Korean Catholic Church set up table tennis. They often play for hours.

A place to worship

Korean Catholic Church meets in Old Wethersfield

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

On any given Sunday, the recreation hall and the grassy area surrounding Sacred Heart Church on Hartford Avenue is filled with lively activity.

Children of all ages run in circles around a large tree, while inside their parents and friends relax after a large meal or play a game of table tennis.

Although all of these people meet in Wethersfield, their homes are located throughout the state. The one key piece they all have in common is their Korean heritage.

"It's the common bond that holds us together," council member Michael Jang said.

Members of the Korean Catholic Church describe themselves as a sub-community of Sacred Heart Church, meeting at that location following the usual Sunday mass to conduct their own mass in Korean.

"The relationship has been steadily getting closer," Jang said.

The Korean Catholic Church has been meeting since 2001, bringing together a diverse community from nine geographic areas around Connecticut. According to Jang, each



photos by Allie Rivera

Members of the Korean Catholic Church, which meets at Sacred Heart Church on Hartford Avenue, come together from all over the state each week for a service and community meal.

of those subdivisions, as they are called, has between six and 10 families that travel to Wethersfield each week.

The Korean Catholic Church offers more than a place to worship. It provides a familiar community to people, many of whom are immigrants adjusting to life in the United States. The church began when many Korean people felt the need for a more accessible religious experience.

"The majority of people who come here are much more comfortable in Korean," Jang said. "People say it's really great not having to translate the message. They can observe and understand, instead of working to translate."

This congregation is believed to be the only church of its kind in the state, which is why some members travel from as far as Fairfield County each week for services.

"I have a son," Jang said. "It's

important for him to have that Korean identity."

Steve Keedle is a church member who travels to town each week from the Bridgeport suburb of Trumbull to attend mass with his wife, Eun Lee.

"When we had the kids, we thought it was very important for them to know their culture," Keedle, who is of European descent, said. "It really is a very vibrant community."

In the years since joining the church, he said they have seen it grow with an influx of Korean people moving to the state.

"We've got a lot of young couple moving into Connecticut, so there's a lot of children," Lee said.

For many church members, being surrounded by the Korean language and culture provides a comfortable environment that cannot always be found in other places.

"Having this community that stays together, it makes us a lot

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Maundy Thursday
6:00 p.m. - Solemn High Mass and Night Watch

Good Friday
Noon - Good Friday Liturgy and Veneration
2:00 to 4:00 - Confessions by Appointment
6:00 - Stations of the Cross

Saturday - Easter Eve
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March 24 - 7:00 p.m. Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service in the Sanctuary

March 26 - 3:00 p.m. Holy Saturday Family Activities & Worship

March 27 - Sunrise Easter Service at Rose Hill Cemetery

Breakfast to follow at the church in Chapin Hall

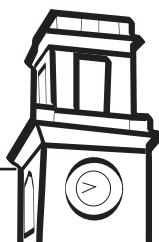
10:00 a.m. Easter Service in the Sanctuary

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Lenten Calendar

Palm Sunday

March 20th

Procession of Palms 10:00 am

Maundy Thursday

March 24th

Service at 7:30 pm

Good Friday

March 25th

Family Worship 2:00 pm

Evening Worship 7:30 pm

Easter Sunday

March 27th

Sunrise Service 6:30 am

at Indian Hill Country Club

Worship in the Sanctuary

9 am and 11 am



When members of the Korean Catholic Church play table tennis after their weekly service, the Rev. Chul Lee is often the first person to pick up a paddle.

closer and unites us,” 17-year-old Christine Park of North Haven said. “There are not a lot of Koreans in my town, so coming here is like coming home.”

In addition to the weekly religious service, the church also

for hours.

One of the most competitive is the church’s spiritual leader, the Rev. Chul Lee.

“He’s a talented man,” Eun Lee said. “He’s almost a pro level of ping pong.”

In addition to his talents at table tennis, the priest is also a musician and composer who creates a majority of the music used during the church services, as well as offering to teach guitar lessons to members.

This feeling of community is considered an important part of the church’s ability to continue through the years and members said the location in Wethersfield is a great benefit to the church and its parishioners.

The location was initially chosen simply because of its availability.

“We are part of the Archdiocese of Hartford, and when we were looking for a place, the archbishop found us this place,” council member Joseph Kang said. “This is a lovely community. We love it here.”

Since beginning their meetings at Sacred Heart, members of the Korean Catholic Church have since come to love the town both for its central location and quaint nature.

“One day we will have our own place in Wethersfield and we will be a greater part of the community,” Kang said.

“We want to have a good

“Having this community that stays together, it makes us a lot closer and unites us.”

—Christine Park

provides its members with a sense of community.

According to Jang, roughly 150 people attend the religious part of the day, but typically around 30 members stay for a Korean meal and gathering.

Each week, the families from the nine sub-divisions take turns cooking a traditional Korean meal. Afterwards, the group often sets up table tennis courts and they play

relationship with the folks who live in Wethersfield,” Jang added.

After nearly 15 years, members of the Korean Catholic Church are glad to be able to offer a welcoming and supportive community to Korean families throughout the state. They look forward to continuing their work.

“It really makes for a community that’s pretty tight,” Keedle said. **WL**



“People told us we were too young to move here, but we absolutely love it.”

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Author Glenn Maynard's third book, "Wayward Soul," was recently published. It's a sequel to his paranormal novel, "Desert Son."



Exploring the paranormal world

Glenn Maynard's new book is the second of a trilogy

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

For many people, the new year brings diets and resolutions. For Glenn Maynard, the start of 2016 brought the publication of his newest book, "Wayward Soul."

Released by Black Rose Writing Jan. 1, the novel is a sequel to his 2014 work, "Desert Son." Maynard, a Wethersfield resident and Glastonbury native, said he started thinking about a sequel when he was reading some reviews of "Desert Son."

"Someone mentioned the way it ended kind of led into something [and asked], 'Do you have anything coming up?' That kind of planted the seed," he said.

The book once again focuses on characters Carter Spence and Brenda Raycroft. It starts with a psychic reading that ends in tragedy when the psychic has an accident and ends up in a coma.

"The story takes place four years after Carter and Brenda discover they are a couple reunited beyond the grave. The spirit world becomes intertwined with their own as they attempt to tap into these secrets to uncover disturbing truths about their fate in this paranormal roller coaster that will shake your soul," according to a description written for the book.

The book is Maynard's third. His first, "Strapped Into An American Dream," detailed

his one-year journey through the 48 continental states, Canada and Mexico in a recreational vehicle. He was a correspondent for three newspapers during his travels.

Maynard said there were challenges with trying to write a sequel rather than something entirely new.

"I think the tough part was to try to create more of that story. They're the same characters, but there's a lot of new ones. It's a different phase of life for them," he said.

"There are a lot of new characters brought to the table. There's a new paranormal story line. The first book had that 'wow' moment. I was able to instill it in this book as well.

"The first book was more of a reincarnation. Really past-life hypnosis regression that takes a turn. I did that in both books, but it has to be in such a vastly different way as well," he added.

Maynard, who has a day job as an insur-

ance analyst at UnitedHealthcare, has been trying a new system for writing, giving himself a weekly quota.

"I gave myself a 5,000 words a week quota," he said.

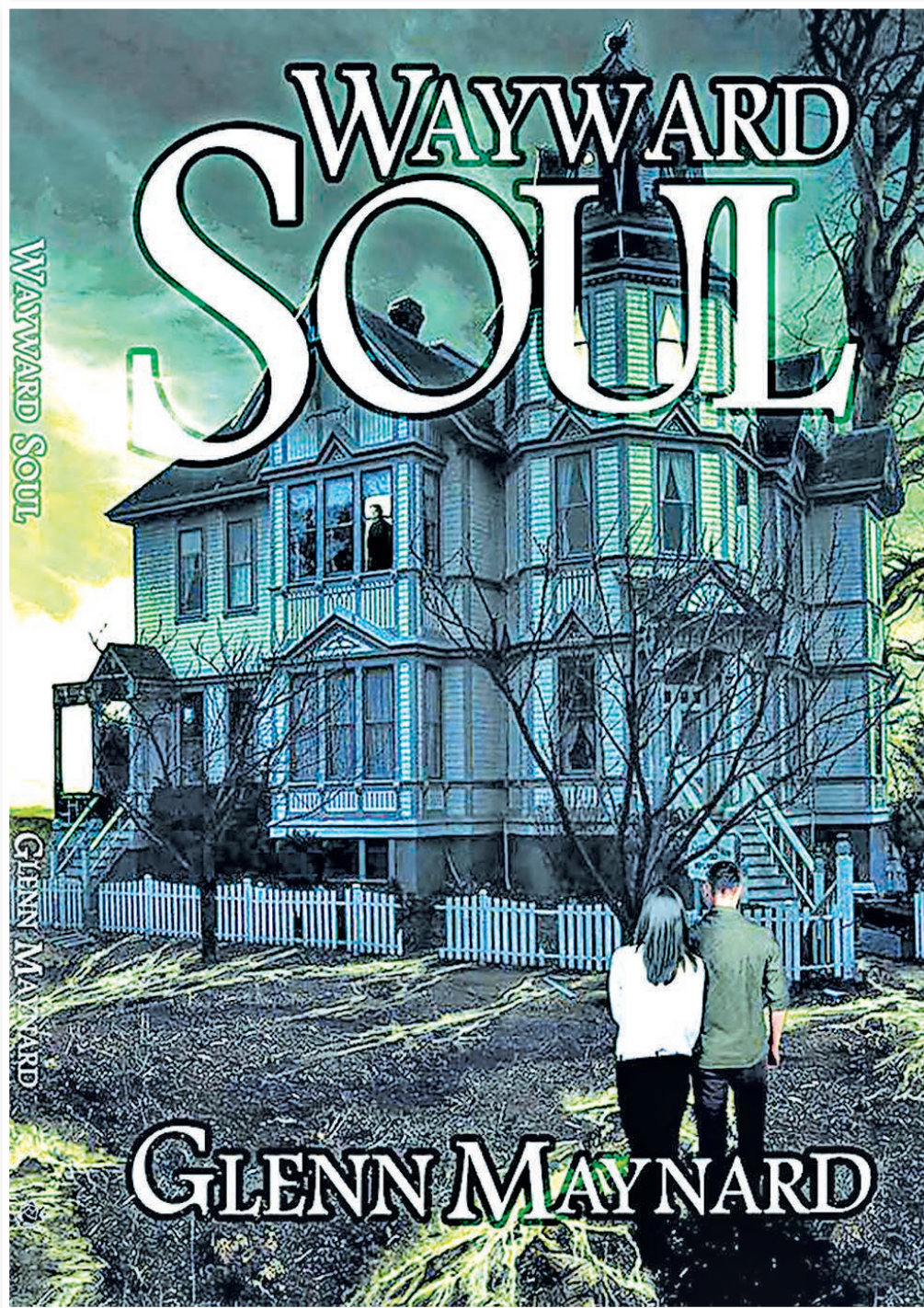
Using that as motivation, he wrote the first draft in about 20 weeks.

"I do the writing, usually evenings after work. I try to look at it as 1,000 words a night. But it's not going to happen every night," he said.

"With 5,000 words a week, you can miss two days. There's that kind of thinking. Sometimes I'm on Saturday, the last day of the week, trying to make it happen. It's a motivator, trying to keep on schedule."

It's been working for him. He recently finished a third book in the series, which came in at more than 100,000 words, his longest yet.

"That's where I am now, trying to do a book a year. Right now, I want to be at that



pace. It took a long while to get up to speed," he said.

He's also refined the way he approaches his writing.

"For the first two, I plotted out from the beginning to the end, then for the third one, I had nothing. I just started from scratch and just started writing. I wanted to try that approach and see where it took me," he said.

"It was a very different approach. I found I was able to write more. I'm usually very structured. I wanted to write more; I wanted to write a bigger book."

He credits that approach with helping him reach 100,000 words for the draft.

"That's because I was able to take turns and go on tangents in this way and that way and just kind of take things as they come," he said.

While he enjoys the creative process, Maynard is not so fond of the "social media, the marketing of and just putting yourself out there. If I could just sit here and write books, [I would]. I don't want to have to showboat, to scream it from

"I just started from scratch and just started writing. I wanted to try that approach and see where it took me."

-Glenn Maynard

the hilltops. That's not who I am," he said.

"I have to do it in order to get the word out about the books. The social media end of it is endless, whether promoting on Facebook or LinkedIn or Goodreads or Amazon blog posts, reaching out to libraries, the media, anything you can do. It's a constant pursuit, doing all that and still writing the books."

He noted it's especially challenging with multiple projects.

"With the second book, it was a 265-page book and I was editing. I can't tell you how many times I edited that and I was writing the third book and marketing and doing social media. There wasn't a lot of free time, and then a full-time job on top of that," he said.

While he's committed to writing fiction these days, some of his fans simply enjoy his style of writing, such as Melissa John of South Glastonbury, who's read "Strapped Into An American Dream" and "Desert Son," and is looking forward to checking out "Wayward Soul."

"His travel book is about chucking it all and hitting the road. I would love to do that. Most people want to do that, but it's a very difficult thing to pull off. He did it, and his book tells you how he was able to do it," she said.

"He talks about the interesting people he met and all of the places he went to. This book is for everyone who wants to travel the country, and for everyone who wants to travel, but know they never will,"

John added.

"As for 'Desert Son,' this story starts out with an out-of-body experience and it continues on his eerie path and there's past-life-regression and reincarnation.

It was very hard to put down and I am looking forward to the sequel. Glenn has a very unique writing style. I highly recommend his books."

Maynard is influenced by horror legend Stephen King.

"That's who I try to emulate. I just love his stories, his style," he said.

Maynard plans to continue exploring the world beyond this one.

"I'm just fascinated with what happens after we die. It's the unknown. You hear so many things, real-life accounts of people coming back [such as when] they died on the operating table for 10 minutes. It's fascinating to me." **WL**

Glenn Maynard's books are available at amazon.com and other retailers. Learn more at glennmaynard.weebly.com.



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LIFE

in the classroom

Writing takes the forefront at Hanmer School

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Writing is considered a vital skill by educators, no matter what career a child eventually pursues.

That's one of the reasons why it is a high-priority curriculum item throughout all grades of the Wethersfield Public Schools.

A case in point involves the sixth grade class of Colleen Budaj at Hanmer School. A recent visit found the students actively involved in learning how to express themselves through the written word.

"It's such an important focus for us throughout the district," Principal Margaret Zacchei said.

She pointed out that the writing focus carries across all content areas including social studies, math and science. All of these disciplines, and more, are incorporating modern technology to improve the learning process.

Older children at Hanmer can utilize Chromebooks that travel around the school on a cart. The younger ones work with iPads. Zacchei said this is important because it helps to prepare them for the standardized Smarter Balanced assessment tests that must be taken online.

Critical issues and critical thinking are involved in the way writing is taught. Students learn different organizational structures related to how they write.

They are encouraged to become actively engaged in their lessons and talk with one another. On this particular day, they were all working off the same book, called a mentor text, and writing theme-based literary essays.

"We teach specific strategies for careful listening," Zacchei said.

"I've always loved the workshop model," Budaj added.



photos by Mark Jahne

Rita Konjusha types on her Chromebook. Technology is an important part of modern education.

She teaches writing and the readers' workshops at Hanmer and likes to use mentor texts to provide examples of strong writing.

Budaj, who has been employed by the Wethersfield Public Schools for 19 years, finds that using the workshop model not only increases writing skills, it fosters independence and accountability in her students. They work as teams and each

member is responsible to his or her partner to get their schoolwork done completely and on time.

"They all have writing partners," she said.

The students buy in, she added, because they get to choose most of the topics for their writing assignments. They use charts, checklists and other tools as guides.

"They all pick things they are

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very passionate about,” she added.

Some write on Chromebooks while others opt for the traditional pencil and paper. Budaj doesn't care as long as they commit themselves to their studies.

One of the writing pairs consists of Rita Konjusha and Will Monroe. They talked about persuasive essays they recently wrote.

“I wrote about [having] less homework,” Rita said. “I focused mostly on the teacher's perspective.”

Her argument was that reducing the volume of homework would benefit students by providing them with more family time while also resulting in less work for the teacher. She said her homework volume increased significantly from fifth grade to sixth grade.

Will advocated for the school to allow students to play flag football during recess and used statistics to counter arguments that it is not safe.

“I was pushing just to get it for the sixth-graders. We are more accountable than the younger grades,” he said.

Will said many sixth-graders

serve on various committees within the school and flag football could be seen as a reward for their extra effort.

“In this unit, we're also looking at social issues a little bit. I wrote an

essay all about how we should watch ‘High School Musical,’” said Taylor Moran.

She wrote her piece during a long weekend that featured a couple of days off because of snow. Taylor

said she used a strategy that features power, perspective and positioning.

Her contention was that the movie would help students shed the stress they feel from their high volume of homework. **WL**



Students sit on the floor to form a circle in the classroom of Colleen Budaj at Hanmer School.

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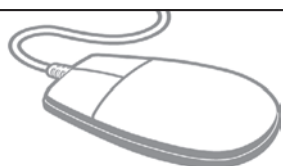
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LIVING *Your Best* LIFE

A rewarding read

United Way volunteer reaches out to children in city school

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer



Courtesy photo

"It's interesting how you fall into things," Martha Koehler mused while sitting in a tall, cushioned chair in her living room. Her rescued greyhound, Luke, spread across the floor at her feet.

Known as Marty to family and friends, Koehler said her latest pas-

sion project, volunteering as a reader for the United Way, was something that she stumbled into after a chance encounter with an old friend.

"Last August I was in Rite Aid and I saw my friend Joan [Haines]," Koehler recalled. "She was on her way to speak to her church group about the United Way and their

reading program."

A licensed clinical social worker, Koehler was at the time less than a year into her retirement and said she was looking for something in her life, though she did not know exactly what.

"I love structure and being around people," she said. "It's been

different, because I've always worked."

As they stood talking in the pharmacy, Haines explained the United Way's volunteer reading program to Koehler, who was immediately intrigued. The program stretches across the country, connecting local volunteers to disadvantaged



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LIVING *Your Best* LIFE

elementary schools where they work one-on-one with students.

"Really, what we ask volunteers to do is work one on one with students and read a book to them," Patrick Doyle, senior community engagement manager at the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, said.

"As the volunteer is reading to the student, they're doing it in a way that aligns with and reflects the classroom learning, asking questions, diving a little bit deeper into the text and working on vocabulary and comprehension."

After learning about the program through her friend, Koehler decided that she wanted to volunteer. She took a placement at Alfred E. Burr Elementary School in Hartford.

"Being an inner city school, the need is so great there," Koehler said.

She began volunteering in September and quickly realized how many students were in need of help.

"It's sad. A lot of times, the kids can't even get to school on time, and they rely on the school for breakfast and lunch," she said. "It's totally different than what you would see in Wethersfield or Rocky Hill or any of

these surrounding towns."

The educational need is especially great at the elementary level, where students have the greatest chance of falling behind.

"One of the reasons we focus specifically on students in kindergarten through third grade is that we know it's critically important for kids to be on reading level by the fourth grade," Doyle said.

To help reach that goal, Koehler and the other volunteers are assigned two students with whom they each spend half an hour per week reading a book. Koehler works with two boys in kindergarten at Burr School named Nathan and Israel.

"I love it because you have direct contact with these little guys," she said. "You start to form a bond with them and they look forward to you coming every week."

She visits Burr every Tuesday morning to volunteer. Upon arriving at the school, she goes to the main office, where a small area has been stocked with books and materials from which United Way volunteers can choose.

During the half hour she spends

with each student, Koehler reads a book while asking comprehension questions and completes a list of sight words with the child. She has already seen evidence of the impact she has made.

"Even in the short time I've worked with them, I can see a difference," she said. "Everyone at the school couldn't be more gracious."

"It really makes a difference for these students and it's a ton of fun for the volunteers," Doyle said. "They can see the progress that these kids make. We've got so many great volunteers because they see that and they want to do more."

For Koehler, that desire to want to do more has already stuck. She volunteers once a week at the school and is considering adding another day to her schedule.

"Of all the volunteer jobs I've done, this to me is the most rewarding," she said. "The way you see the kids light up, they still have that innocence about them."

The United Way reading program is not her first foray into volunteering. An active member of Trinity Episcopal Church, Koehler volunteers with its

mission work as often as possible.

She is still adjusting to retired life after working in a variety of hospitals and mental health clinics and is now able to devote more of her time to her hobbies. "I absolutely adore gardening," she said. "During the winter I do have some flowers in the house."

Additionally, Koehler meets regularly with a group of friends to knit as well as attending exercise classes at the Pitkin Community Center, including tai chi and Dancing to the Oldies.

"It's an exercise class, but it's to the old songs that you haven't heard since junior high," she said with a small laugh.

Koehler said her time volunteering with the United Way has been a great experience and she encourages others to look into the program.

"You don't have to have a Ph.D. to do this. You just have to have a love of reading and love of kids," she said. "And to think, if I hadn't run into Joan that day in Rite Aid, I never would have done any of this." **WL**

For more information about the United Way's Reading Program visit unitedway.org.



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LIVING *Your Best* LIFE

The art of making new friends over 50



Friendships are good for your health. People who have close friends and confidants live longer than those who don't, according to an Australian study. The researchers even found that those with the largest number of friends survived the longest.

So how do you start? Here are a few tips for striking up a friendship when you're over 50.

Take possession of a place. Doing so both mentally and physically will make that space more personal.

Put yourself forward. The key to starting a friendship often means putting yourself out there first and not waiting for people to come to you.

Embrace relationships with both genders. Older people have more freedom to have those relationships without all

the complications they had in their youth.

Reach out to people who are new to the community. This can be the key to a new relationship.

Put yourself out there. There are many ways to open the doors to friendships by simply getting out. **WL**
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Making everyday living easier for mom and dad

Part of my job as an occupational therapist is helping to make tasks of daily living easier and more manageable for patients. Typically in therapy we work on addressing individuals' impairments to allow them full participation and quality of life in their everyday tasks.

Sometimes compensatory tools are helpful to let people achieve these tasks with independence. Here are a few helpful tools and suggestions.

Elastic shoe laces

They make shoes easy to slip on and off and work well with a long-handled shoe horn. They're especially helpful for people who have trouble bending.

Button hook

A handy gadget to help with pulling buttons through button-down shirts or jackets is especially helpful for people with arthritis, numbness in their fingers, or decreased dexterity.

Sock aid

Helps those who have trouble bending or have precautions against bending pull on their socks.

Reacher

Helps with grabbing hard-to-reach items and is especially useful for people with poor balance or for people who have trouble bending.

Leg lifter

Helps people with pain or weakness lift their legs out of their car or bed.

Zipper pull

Helps pull zippers up and down. Great for people with poor dexterity or visual impairments creating trouble finding their zipper or using it in a timely fashion.

Lift assist cushion

A non-electric and portable cushion that helps people out of a chair. Perfect for people who have already tried therapy training and strengthening and still need that little boost.

Swivel cushion

Turntable cushion that can help with pivoting in or out of a chair.

Shelf paper liner

Can be used as a non-skid material to place under wheelchair cushions or walker trays or used as a placement under plates, cups or utensils. A small

piece works well to help people grip the top of a jar to open or close it more easily.

Handy bar

Portable grab bar that fits on all cars to help with sitting in or standing out of a car, providing a safe and sturdy bar to press down on.

Bed assist bar

A bed rail that needs no installation and provides something for people to hold on to for improved mobility in bed and transfers into and out of bed.

Weighted utensils

Helpful in stabilizing tremors and cutting down on spillage when eating.

Rocker knife/pizza cutter

A useful tool for one-handed cutting for people who have had a stroke, amputation, paralysis or other issue. A piece of paper or Dycem non-slip material can be placed under the plate to prevent slipping.

Jar opener

Helps with gripping and opening jars. Especially helpful for people with decreased sensation, strength or dexterity in their hands.

1- to 2-inch pipe insulation

Cut into small segments and tape over feeding utensil handles, walker handles or writing implements to improve grip and maneuverability. Especially helpful for people with arthritis or a diminished grasp.

Book holder

Holds a book in place at the right page so people can focus their attention on reading rather than struggling to hold the book open.

Card holder

Holds playing cards to keep people playing with their friends. Especially helpful for people with arthritis or decreased sensation. **WL**

Note: people experiencing a new onset of any of the problems above should schedule an appointment with their physician and consider therapy treatments to assess the extent of the problem and provide exercises and education to prevent further damage.

Submitted by Amanda Bierkan, home-care occupational therapist out of Hartford Health Care at Home.

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News roundup

Church offers financial aid

Trinity Episcopal Church has been given the opportunity to reach out to the community and the world through the sale of its rectory. Ten percent of the proceeds are being allocated to those beyond the Trinity community who share the mission of deepening relationship with God and serving their neighbors.

The church has created the Great Trinity Give-Away. One phase involves working in conjunction with the town Department of Social and Youth Services to offer funding to help those whose needs are not currently being met.

A second phase involves an invitation to other Wethersfield houses of worship to apply for one of eight \$1,000 grants designed to support specific outreach needs. Beyond that, Trinity Episcopal will donate a portion to its own outreach programs and a portion to the Global Needs Fund of the Episcopal Relief and Development organization.

Finally, smaller grants will be made available to Trinity parishioners who may apply on behalf of an organization whose needs the parishioner supports.

Business expo upcoming

The Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce will host a business expo from 4-7 p.m. April 7 at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, 200 Main St. This free event will feature local businesses and light refreshments.

There will be informational seminars every 30 minutes about such topics as credit card processing and chip technology, 401k plans for all size businesses, business insurance, marketing and social media.

The Town of Wethersfield will provide free information for people who are looking to start a business or trying to navigate the waters. Businesses interested in participating may contact Leslie Civitello at wethersfield@sbcglobal.net for an exhibitor application.

Tag sale returns

The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum Tags & Treasures Sale returns from 9



1

a.m. to 4 p.m. April 2 and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 3 in the Webb Barn, 211 Main St. Single-day admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children.

For more than 40 years, this sale has been organized by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Connecticut. The biannual event features hundreds of household items, including small furniture, vintage pieces, and historic estate items from some of Connecticut's oldest families.

Easter eggs on display

The Wethersfield Library welcomes spring with a display of Ukrainian Easter eggs, or pysankas, from the

collection of resident and folk artist Tanya Osadca.

A master artisan of the craft, she has created and developed one of the largest pysanky collections outside of Ukraine. Her eggs are decorated in the traditional manner by using the wax-resist method. A simple home-made stylus called a "kystka" and melted bees wax are required for drawing the designs. Natural or batik dyes are used for coloring.

The designs are replications of original designs gathered during the course of her research. A representative sample of her collection will be on display at the library during the month of March.

Steps to spiritual health

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 371 Wolcott Hill Road, offers a non-traditional worship service at 7 p.m. Thursdays that follows the outline of the 12 steps of recovery. Each week the program explores one of the 12 steps to see how they apply to those who seek to grow in their faith in Jesus and their walk in life.

A Taste of Discovery

1. The CREC Discovery Academy recently held a Taste of Discovery event. Leah Cha, 7, Julie Cha, 3, and Alex Cha, 9, stand with a sign that indicates their country of origin. The event encourages community and

relationship building among the school's diverse population and this year's entry celebrated first-generation families, such as the Chas.

Dance the Balkan way

Always on Sunday International Folk dance group is having a Balkan Dance Party with music by Zdravets from 7-10 p.m. Feb. 28 at Temple Beth Torah, 130 Main St. Admission is \$12. See alwaysonsunday.us for more information.

Dine at Zachary's Table

On the third Tuesday of each month, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 371 Wolcott Hill Road, hosts a free community pasta dinner in its parish education building.

Residents are invited to share in this fellowship opportunity where people get together to feed their bodies as well as nourish their spirits. Call Russ at 860-721-9080 for a ride.

Lecture rescheduled

The Wethersfield Historical Society lecture entitled, "New Connecticut: The

Connecticut Western Reserve," was rescheduled from Feb. 8 to Feb. 29 because of snow. It takes place at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, 200 Main St. Admission is \$5, free to Wethersfield Historical Society members.

Library closes for holiday weekend

The Wethersfield Library will be closed March 25-27 for the Easter holiday. It resumes regular hours on Monday, March 28. The library's regular hours are 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, and 1-5 p.m. Sunday.

Taste of Wethersfield returns

2. The Wethersfield Historical Society will host the 11th Annual Taste of Wethersfield benefit from 7-9 p.m. April 9 at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, 200 Main St. Some of the best restaurants and caterers in Greater Hartford are expected to be on hand to serve their wares.

Savor a variety of wines and beers



2

that pair well with the food tastings and bid for items at the silent auction. Proceeds will help fund the society's

free or low-cost educational and cultural programming for children and adults. **WL**

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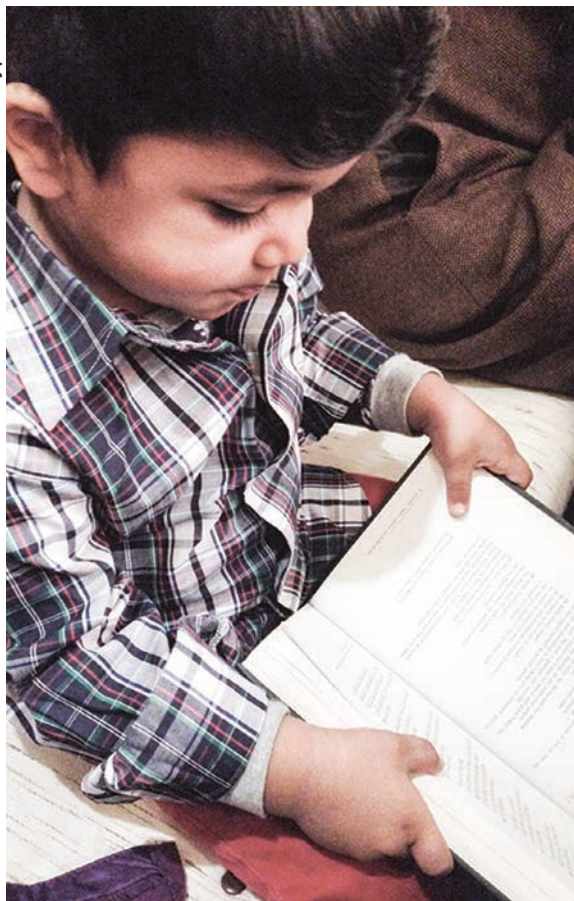
The Wethersfield Library hosted Take Your Child to the Library Day Feb. 6. Those who went downstairs to the children's room found a bevy of activities based on popular children's and young adult books, ranging from "Pete the Cat" to "Harry Potter." Each of the six featured books has a variety of activities, ranging from arts and crafts to a scavenger hunt in the library. As a bonus, any child who completed at least one activity from each station was entered for a chance to win a new Kindle.



1. For one afternoon, James DeRienzo IV, 2, was able to live the life of a clown. **2.** The brother and sister duo Matthew and Mackenzie Inkel, ages 6 and 5, respectively, crafted paper cats and cardboard flies at the "Fly Guy" station.



courtesy photos



Elyas Mahir Mannan, 2 ½, follows along in the prayer book at the service at Temple Beth Torah in Old Wethersfield.

'Love for all, hatred for none'

Temple Beth Torah invites Muslim community to visit synagogue

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

On one of the darkest days of the year, members of Temple Beth Torah in Old Wethersfield invited members of the Baitul Aman Mosque of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community to join them for Friday evening services welcoming the Sabbath.

The Meriden mosque was the target of a hate crime this past November when several bullets were fired into the house of worship.

Dr. Mohammed "Mahmood" Qureshi and Zahir Mannan, along with his wife, two children and parents, attended the Dec. 18 service and spoke to the congregation. They came at the invitation of Rabbi Seth Riemer of Newington, Beth Torah's spiritual leader, who has engaged with the Ahmadiyya group for a number of years and has known Mannan since he was in high school.

"I keep in close touch with these folks. They are always emailing me and phoning me and wishing me blessed holidays and I try to do the same,

although I think they're better at it than I am," Riemer said.

"They're just blessed, sweet people. When the mosque was hit with bullets, I reached out to them."

His goal was two-fold.

"Partly to show support for them. It's important for them to hear from people who really validate them," Riemer said.

"I think it's important for our synagogue community that its rabbi is supportive of the Muslim community. Temple Beth Torah has been very supportive of me in my outreach."

"Rabbi Seth has been a wonderful friend for over 10 years. He joined our end service in 2004 in Wallingford and ever since we have been doing events together to create and build the bridges of brotherhood between the Ahmadiyya Muslim and the Jewish community," Qureshi said.

A physician, he is president of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Connecticut Chapter.

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"Seth has spoken at many of our interfaith events and we have joined services in different synagogues. Both Jewish and Muslim faith stem from the Abrahamic roots," Qureshi said. "We have more in common than it is realized in terms of our practices and beliefs. We can build bridges of peace on highlighting the commonality."

He was a guest of U.S. Rep. Joseph Courtney at President Barack Obama's final State of the Union address.

"Islam is inherently a religion of peace. The radicals and terrorists have hijacked our religion and we have to take it back from them peacefully with our deeds and professing the message of peace that is given in the Quran by sticking to our roots," Qureshi said.

Qureshi and Mannan spoke during the service, then joined the congregation for more informal conversation afterwards.

"We have crossed paths at interfaith functions in the past, but with all the tensions surrounding Muslims in the past weeks, we felt this would be a good time to connect on a more personal basis. The group from the Ahmadiyya community was diverse, young and old, male and female. The children were well-behaved and very much into the musical aspects of our religious service," Kathi Mag said.

The Rocky Hill resident serves on the executive board of Temple Beth Torah.

"The president of the mosque, Mahmood, and a young scholar [Zahir] spoke to our congregation about their faith and our commonality, being descendants of Abraham. The Ahmadiyya are fundamentalists in that they believe that their truth lies in the literal word of the Quran and that one cannot read violence in the words of the Quran," she added.

"My personal impression, after listening to their speakers during our service and chatting with the men and women who stayed for our Oneg Shabbat [social hour] following the service, was that these are people who value family and community, who take their religion seriously, who believe as we do that there is one God and that the religions of the world are simply diverse paths to that God," Mag said.

"While the women wore hijab (head covering), they were open, educated and interested in sharing

their experiences and learning more about ours. They extended an invitation to us to attend their mosque, where they offer open house three times a week," she said.

"The name of their mosque is Baitul Aman, The House of Peace – ironic, in that it was recently fired upon by a drunken, hate-spewing neighbor – a white male with a gun. I will be attending an open house there and have invited some of their congregants to join our ESL class at the Rocky Hill library."

"We have more in common than it is realized in terms of our practices and beliefs. We can build bridges of peace on highlighting the commonality."

– Dr. Mohammed "Mahmood" Qureshi

Temple Beth Torah is a small, unaffiliated, egalitarian congregation. While many members are from the immediate area, others come from as far away as West Hartford, Avon and Coventry.

"Rabbi Seth is a pioneer in establishing a loving and long-standing Jewish-Islamic relationship in Connecticut," said Mannan, who is a head teacher and administrative associate at the Early Learning Program at Central Connecticut State University as well as the press and media coordinator for the Baitul Aman Mosque.

"It was, and always will be, vital for us to come together with people of all backgrounds at a spectrum of venues, be they sacred or secular, to learn from one another about one another, furthering the cause of peace, justice and service to both our faith, fellow beings and country," he added.

"This is part of our community's mission to enact our motto 'love for all, hatred for none,' and it was not the first time. We had previously visited the synagogue, as had Rabbi Seth honored our Baitul Aman

Mosque with his presence and eye-opening talks at many interfaith deliberations throughout the years.

"Rabbi graciously invited us to talk this time on a blessed Shabbat Service at Temple Beth Torah's synagogue during sacred Hanukkah about our message in response to the shootings at our mosque, a testament to his unshakeable love and support towards our community," he added.

"We were honored as Muslims to join rabbi's sacred service in his house of worship on the same day our holy Friday service unified us for prayers in our mosques."

About a dozen members of Temple Beth Torah attended the service. Members of the congregation come from a variety of Jewish backgrounds including Reform, Conservative and Orthodox.

"I think it's one more way of strengthening a sense of trust within our community. In liberal environs such as Connecticut, I think you have a strong opportunity to drive home the point that we are all friends and neighbors. We care about each other across religious lines," Riemer said.

After the service, Mannan wrote the congregation an email thanking them for their hospitality.

"We wanted to whole-heartedly thank you all, and our One God, for inviting us and giving us a voice again at your blessed Temple with love and understanding. Everybody that attended from our community not only felt comfortable, but very much at home," he wrote.

"Our President Mahmood and I shared the wonderful experience with our members with prayers of appreciation on our lips. Many of our prayers are truly indistinguishable from each other, as are the members of our communities," he added.

"We feel you all are like family to us and cannot justly express our gratefulness to have joined and participated in such a moving and special gathering at your Shabbat Shalom service. We hope to visit you again soon." **WL**

Temple Beth Torah is located at 130 Main St., Wethersfield.

Call 860-529-2410 or view

templebethtorahwethersfield.org.

Baitul Aman House of Peace Mosque is located at 410 Main St., Meriden.

Contact Zahir Mannan at

860-670-6402 or

zahir.mannan@muslimyouth.org.



Rabbi Seth Riemer of Temple Beth Torah has a long-standing friendship with the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.



Dr. Mohammed "Mahmood" Qureshi is president of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Connecticut Chapter. He recently spoke at Temple Beth Torah in Old Wethersfield.



Zahir Mannan spoke at Temple Beth Torah in Old Wethersfield in December. He is a long-time friend of Rabbi Seth Riemer.

People notes



Summer Budaj and **Jimmy Slayton**, seniors at Wethersfield High School, signed letters of intent to play college soccer. Summer will play for Missouri Valley College and Jimmy will play at the University of Hartford.

Richard Bielak Jr. was named to the dean's list at the College of the Holy Cross.

Gina Lanzano, Daniel Murray and **Katelyn Rutty** were named to the president's list at Western New England University.



Amy Alasso, Kassandrah Banks, Jessica Cebelius, Sierra Colon, Rachel DiNatalie, Ruth Eragene, Andrew Falce, Alexa Giolito, Alexandra Hoffman, Jacob Houlihan, Justin Jensen, Kayla Litwinko, Austin Musson, Kiara Paez, Abby Phillips, Jamie Piscitello, Nicole Salisbury, Alyssa Santos, Rachel Silva,

Nicole Silva, Kelsey Sullivan, Jayson Veley, Samantha Walter, Max Walter and **Joseph Zocco** were named to the dean's list at Eastern Connecticut State University.

Molly Codeanne, Taylor Fanelli, Yining "Ivy" Liang, Haley Lombardo, Olivia Porriello, Nicole Roode, Annmarie Rotatori, Emily Tylki and **Mary Vidallon** earned high honors at Mercy High School. **Emma Monroe, Maia Oliveri, Maggie Silbo** and **Gabriella St. Pierre** earned first honors and **Kate Susanin** earned second honors.

Anneli Johnson earned high honors on the dean's list at the University of New Hampshire.

Deniz Camli-Saunders earned high honors from the University High School of Science and Engineering. **Helen Neti, Raegan**



Kathleen Tetrault

Light, Alenies Rodriguez and **Ryan Martinez** earned honors.

Kathleen Tetrault has joined the elder law and estate planning firm CzepigaDalyPope as a special needs attorney. **WL**

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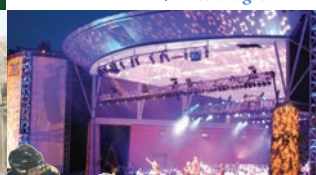
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March *calendar*



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| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |



1 Time to Talk free conversation group for new English language speakers, 7:30 p.m., Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2811 or wethersfieldlibrary.org, also March 8, 15, 22 and 29

7 Family Place Parent-Child Workshop, 6 p.m., registration required, Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2801 or wethersfieldlibrary.org, also March 14, 21, 28 and April 4

7 Connecticut's Three Most Deadly Tornadoes: Wethersfield, Wallingford and Windsor, 7 p.m., Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, 200 Main St., \$5 admission, free to Wethersfield Historical Society members, 860-529-7656 or wethersfieldhistory.org

8 Family Place Parent-Child Workshop, 10:30 a.m., registration required,

Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2801 or wethersfieldlibrary.org, also March 15, 22, 29 and April 5

9 Nutmeg Nibbles, 4 p.m., for grades 2-4, Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2801 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

12 Medaglia di Servizio Service Award Dinner, 6 p.m., Wethersfield Country Club, 76 Country Club Road, \$60, lucianodibacco@att.net, salarosa@sbcglobal.net or pelinosilvestri@cox.net

12 150 Prospect Coffeehouse, 6:30 p.m., Wethersfield United Methodist Church, 150 Prospect St., 860-614-5158 or tanjam@comcast.net

13 The Jolly Beggars, 2 p.m., Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, 200 Main St.,

860-529-7656 or wethersfieldhistory.org

15 Project Create – Make a Kite, 6 p.m., for grades 3-6, registration required, Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2801 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

15 Antique Gem Appraisal Lecture, 6:30 p.m., Wethersfield Academy for the Arts, 431 Hartford Ave., \$10 suggested donation, wethersfieldarts.org

22 Pizza and Pages, 6:30 p.m., for grades 4-6, Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2801 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

22 GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club, 7 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St.,

Newington, 860-666-4371

24 Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, 7 p.m., Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2811 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

31 Beer & Wine Tasting, 7-9 p.m., Pitkin Community Center, 30 Greenfield St., 860-563-0027

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.



Events *spotlight*

Linda Russell & Companie
Feb. 28, 2 p.m.
Keeney Memorial Cultural Center
200 Main St.
860-529-7656 or
wethersfieldhistory.org

From the boisterous ballads of the 18th Century to the sentimental melodies of the Victorian age, Linda Russell recreates a lost national treasure. While performing on guitar, mountain and hammered dulcimers, penny whistle and limberjack, her singing illuminates America's heritage through patriotic anthems,

broadside, hymns and dance tunes. This concert is part of the Kenney Cultural Series produced by the Wethersfield Historical Society. Tickets are \$10 for society members and \$12 for non-members.

**Medaglia di Servizio
Service Award Dinner**
March 12, 6 p.m.
Wethersfield Country Club
76 Country Club Road

Wethersfield UNICO presents its 5th annual dinner, this year honoring

Bryan Colletti, the president and founder of K-9 Crime Stoppers, an organization that trains and raises police dogs. Tickets cost \$60 per person. Make checks payable to Wethersfield UNICO and addressed to Sal LaRosa, 18 Ridgewood Circle, Wethersfield, CT 06109. Include guest name, dinner choice and seating preference. For additional information contact lucianodibacco@att.net, salarosa@sbcglobal.net or pelinosilvestri@cox.net.

The Jolly Beggars
March 13, 2 p.m.
Keeney Memorial Cultural Center
200 Main St.
860-529-7656 or wethersfieldhistory.org

Just in time for St. Patrick's Day, come enjoy an afternoon of Celtic music, storytelling, reels and jigs. This concert is part of the Kenney Cultural Series produced by the

Wethersfield Historical Society. Tickets are \$10 for society members and \$12 for non-members.

Beer & Wine Tasting
March 31, 7-9 p.m.
Pitkin Community Center
30 Greenfield St.
860-563-0027

The Wethersfield Volunteer Firefighter's Association, in conjunction with Steve Leon and Wine Cellars 4 in Farmington, presents this 11th annual event. Proceeds will benefit the WVFA Scholarship Fund and 10 percent of all sales will go to the WFVA. Tickets are \$25 and will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis. Guests will receive a commemorative wine glass. Order tickets in advance, this event usually sells out.

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Editorial

So, where do we cut?

It's budget season for both local and state government and, as always, taxes are at the forefront of most people's minds. They almost always seem to go up, don't they? The only question is how much.

That is partly due to the fact that government, just like homeowners and businesses, faces the same annual increase in costs for water, electricity, natural gas, oil, telecommunications, motor vehicles, various forms of insurance and countless other things.

One of the few commodities that has dramatically decreased in cost over the past year is gasoline, but how long will that last?

We clamor for our elected officials to keep taxes under control. Sometimes that works, at least at the municipal level, but so many costs are fixed in terms of labor agreements, employee benefits and such that the focus switches to the rest.

At the state level, we have seen decades of increased spending as government continues to grow. It's easy to spend other people's money, and a series of governors and legislatures have done just that for decades.

The challenge is that there are only so many new sources of revenue to tap, and the last thing most people want is an expansion of the products and services that become subject to taxation.

That leaves no option but cutting the budget.

On paper, this sounds simple. Surely we can trim a little here and lop off a little there. That should help, right?

It does, but nipping and tucking will not make a significant dent in the tax burden, either locally or at the state level. One needs big cuts to achieve big savings.

So, where do we cut? Which programs and services need to be reduced in size or scope to less than desired levels in the name of budget reform?

Do we reduce local or state spending for education? If so, are we willing to accept less-accomplished children as a result?

Do we cut Medicaid or other programs that primarily serve senior citizens? If so, where do they turn for help? Social services at all levels are already strapped for staff and cash.

Do we reduce the number of police on the streets or troopers on the highways? Do we reduce the number of snowplows? Do we slash programs that help the poor, the developmentally disabled, or the long-term unemployed?

There are no easy answers, but the people we voted into office we tasked with the duty of making these hard decisions. We need to hold their feet to the fire while at the same time understanding that this is a daunting task. **WL**

Letter

Hooray for firefighters

To the Editor:

After living through a very cold weekend here in Wethersfield, I thought a letter praising our volunteer fire department was worth publishing.

I am a resident of MillPointe, the five-story building behind Marshall's. Our frigid cold Valentine's weekend made me appreciate, once again, our Wethersfield Volunteer Fire Department.

The extreme cold produced some malfunctioning in our fire alarm system that went off,

not once, but twice (first at 8 a.m. on the 14th and again at 4 a.m. the following morning). Both times our fire department responded immediately.

One resident clocked their arrival in six minutes. We are so fortunate to have this dedicated crew of volunteer firemen in our town. Thank you for your time and effort during the coldest weekend this winter. We are truly grateful.

Kate Woodworth

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Letters

Improving school climate and communication

To the Editor:

While November is the time of elections and candidates' promises, January is the time elected officials start to deliver. The Wethersfield Board of Education is doing just that.

Having heard town residents demand more communication and concerns about how teachers are often out of the classroom, the current board has made reaching out to community members, parents and teachers a priority.

After vigorous debate at the Jan. 12 meeting, the board decided to form an ad hoc subcommittee to investigate and make recommendations for changes to the district's professional development program.

The state Board of Education requires all districts to provide 18 hours of professional development for teachers. Parents will recognize this as days kids are off from school. But the district goes further, providing extra levels of P.D. for teachers in an effort to boost teacher skill levels so as to improve student test scores.

Because school days are not unlimited, some of the extra P.D. results in teachers being pulled out of classrooms, meaning the students have substitutes for part of the school day. This board, led by Bobbie Granato, is using the new special advisory committee chaired by Matthew Forrest to review the P.D. program, particularly the teacher pull-out issue.

Unlike other committees the board has, this special advisory committee is comprised mostly of parents and teachers, the community members who have in the past felt shut out of the system.

But this board hasn't stopped there. On Jan. 25, the board had another vigorous debate and approved creation of a second ad hoc subcommittee to investigate and make recommendations regarding school climate and communication with parents, community members, students and staff.

This committee is likewise seeking to bring community members and even students into the educational process to suggest ways to make our schools a great experience for all our kids.

As was discussed at this board meeting, this subcommittee is a direct consequence of candidates, now board members, who listened to parents and voters during the campaign season and are now putting those lessons to task.

We will be looking for any interested parents, students and staff members to join the committee and offer their opinions. All are welcome in whatever role you wish to play. They're your schools, folks, and this board wants to know your thoughts.

*John Morris
Vice Chairman
Board of Education*

Webb thanks Keane

To the Editor:

The Webb PTO would like to extend sincere thanks to Judy Keane, the board, and all the members of the Keane Foundation for their incredible generosity to Webb Elementary School.

Webb is very grateful for the financial support the Keane Foundation has provided for students to participate in several creative learning opportunities this coming spring. In addition to benefiting Webb students, all students and families of Wethersfield will be

invited to participate in one of these incredible programs at an evening event.

Judy Keane and the Keane Foundation embody the sentiment that goodness can come from life's most difficult challenges. The Webb community and the Wethersfield community are extremely lucky to benefit from such generosity.

*Melissa Hoon, Kimberly King,
Joann Bresnahan, Jamie Tsolas,
Shannon McNeice and Karen Inkel
Webb PTO board members*

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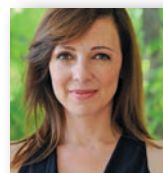
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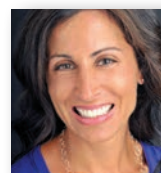
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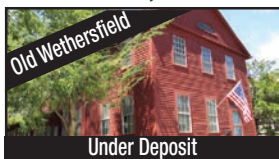
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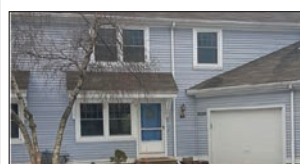


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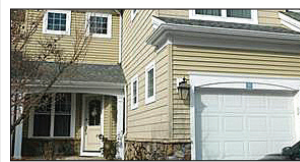
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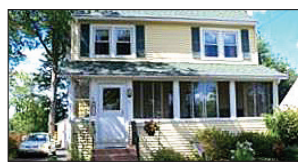
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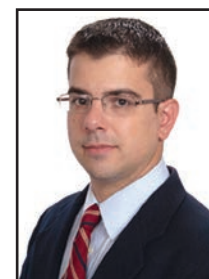
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Debra Raymond, Manager of William Raveis Real Estate, Mortgage and Insurance, is pleased to announce the addition of Tom Pia to the Wethersfield Office. "We are pleased to have Tom on board, and we're confident he'll bring added value to the home buying and selling experience for all his clients," stated Debra Raymond.

"Wethersfield is a town that reminds me so much of where I grew up. A close community, with good people taking care of each other and having an enjoyment in family and life. I see the same in the William Raveis Wethersfield team and myself. A group of people who care about their community and each other, have a lot of fun, and are *exceptional* at what they do. I am proud to be able to represent William Raveis as I continue to help my clients," stated Tom Pia.

Born and raised in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Tom and his wife Irene of 19 years have lived in Wethersfield for 17 years along with their 2 children Lindsey 12 and Zachary 8. Tom has been a member of Pine Acres Swim & Tennis Club in Wethersfield for 8 years, 7 years as board member and the last 2 years as Board President. He also is a volunteer coach in town youth programs for the past 12 years. Baseball is his passion. He has played it and loves to coach and teach it!

Having spent 10 years in the industry, Tom is a marketing and sales specialist in single family homes, first time and move up home buyers, active adult communities and condominiums. Tom has helped clients in almost every corner of the state but covers Hartford, Middlesex, Tolland and Northern New Haven counties.

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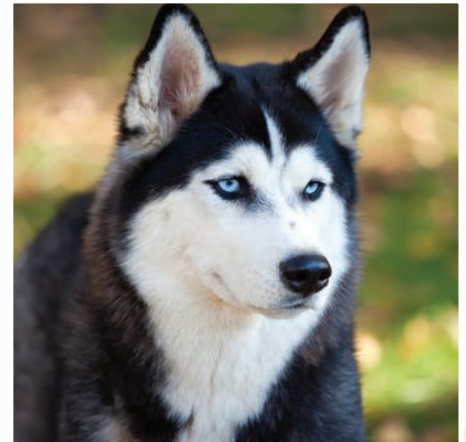


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Meet Missy and Georgette



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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]



Spring Forward

After hitting rock bottom day-light-wise back on the Winter Solstice in December, we've been steadily gaining daylight (recently 2-3 min/day). We'll continue to do so as we head toward the summer solstice (June 20th). And this month, two important things

happen pertaining to the sun:

(1) On Sunday, the 13th, Daylight Saving Time (DST) kicks off – officially at 2 a.m. This is when we set our clocks ahead one hour, to reallocate time from the morning to the afternoon. It's easiest to turn clocks ahead an hour before going to sleep Saturday; then on Sunday, the sun rises at 7:05 a.m. and sets at

6:56 p.m. It's also a good time to put fresh batteries in the smoke detectors!

(2) One week later, on the 20th, is the vernal equinox in the Northern Hemisphere – the official beginning of spring (at 12:30 a.m.). The term "equinox" is Latin, referring to the days of the year when there is equal day and equal night – when the Earth's

axis is not tilting in either direction toward or away from the sun (also occurring in September with the transition from summer to autumn). However, the exact timing is more of an approximate - on the 20th we will actually have 12 hours and 10 minutes of possible daylight (sunrise 6:53 a.m., sunset 7:04 p.m.). **WL**

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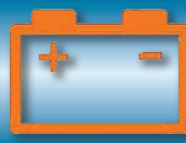


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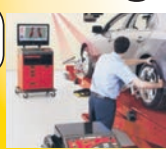
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